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ABSTRACT

In 1981, a survey was conducted to determine the methods used in Arizona community colleges to place students in English composition courses. Questionnaires concerning placement practices were sent to 32 community college administrators, and 21 usable responses were returned. Study findings included the following: (1) while no college required an examination prior to admission, 52% required an examination prior to registration; (2) a wide variety of examinations, most commercially prepared, were used for student placement in English courses; (3) 62% of the colleges used a writing examination for student placement, with eight using a multiple choice test and more than half using a writing sample; (4) 22% of the colleges required a mathematics examination prior to registration; (5) 52% used test scores for placement and 48% used them in counseling; (6) 57% used English courses as prerequisites for other English courses; and (7) 38% used English Placement Examination scores as prerequisites for English courses, but no college used these scores as prerequisites for social sciences, technology, or occupational courses. (LAL)

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PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH COURSES IN ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES 1981

by

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JC 830 476

A Paper Presented at the Arizona English Teachers Association (AETA) and the Pacific Coast Regional Conference on English in the Two Year College (PCEC), November 6-7, 1981, Phoenix, Arizona

PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS IN ENGLISH COURSES
IN ARIZONA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Arizona Community Colleges use many methods of placing students in English composition courses. To determine the practices of placement of students in Arizona Community Colleges, a questionnaire was sent to thirty-two Community Colleges administrators who were listed in the 1979 edition of Marqui's Yearbook of Higher Education.

Twenty-three questionnaires or 79% of the total were returned. Two questionnaires were eliminated from the study since they were duplicates. Three institutions did not respond.

ADMISSIONS AND REQUIRED EXAMINATIONS

No Arizona Community College required an examination prior to admission to the college.

REGISTRATION AND PLACEMENT EXAMINATIONS

Slightly more than half of the 21 questionnaires studied (52%) indicate that those Community Colleges that do not require an examination for admission most likely require one prior to registration. One Community College advises students

to take examinations prior to registration.

EXAMINATIONS USED PRIOR TO REGISTRATION

There is a wide range of examinations used in Arizona Community Colleges for the placement of students in English courses. For the most part, the examinations are commercially prepared.

General Examination

The SAT is one of three tests used by one of the Colleges.

Reading

Four examinations are used by approximately one half of the Community Colleges.

Number of Colleges	Percent	Test
3	14	Nelson Denny Reading Test
3	14	College's own test
4	19	C.E.E.B.
1	5	S.R.A. Placement Test

Writing

Five commercially prepared examinations are used in Arizona Community Colleges by approximately one fourth of the colleges (29%)

Number of Colleges	Percent	Test
2	9	C.G.P.
1	5	C.E.E.P.
1	5	W.R.A.T.
1	5	W.E.E.
1	5	C.E.E.G.

Almost two thirds (62%) or 13/21 of the Arizona Community Colleges who responded to the item on writing examinations use a test for the placement of students.

Eight institutions use a multiple choice examination and more than half use a writing sample. There is some overlap in the usage of the examinations, i.e., some institutions use a writing sample and a multiple choice examination. Two institutions do not use a writing sample.

More than half of the Community Colleges use two readers to score the writing sample while 5 use only one reader.

Mathematics

Five Community Colleges require a mathematics examination prior to registration, i.e., 22% of the respondents.

English for Foreign Students

An oral interview and The John Test are used by one Community College and the Michigan Test by another one.

USE OF THE SCORES

Respondents did not elaborate well on the use of the scores. It appears that counseling and placement are not very well defined in some Community Colleges. The two terms are not mutually exclusive. Placement indicates that the student has no choice, i.e., s/he is placed in a course according to scores. Counseling indicates that students are counseled about their performance on the test and then it is

up to them to select the course that they want. It is interesting to note that one Community College allows students to register in an advanced course although the placement tests indicate a lower placement.

More than half of the Community Colleges (52%) use the scores for placement purposes and less than half (48%) use the scores for counseling.

OTHER USES OF SCORES

A Community College reported that scores are used for placing students in advanced classes.

USE OF ENGLISH COURSES AS PREREQUISITES FOR OTHER COURSES

More than half of the Community Colleges (57%) use English coures for prerequisites for other English courses. One Community College uses English courses as prerequisites for social sciences courses and two colleges use English courses as prerequisites for technology/occupation courses.

USE OF ENGLISH PLACEMENT SCORES AS PREREQUISITES

Less than half of the Community Colleges (38%) use the scores as prerequisites for English but not as prerequisites for social sciences, technology, or occupation.

SUMMARY

A survey of the placement practices of the Arizona Community Colleges in English composition and other courses was conducted in 1981. There was a 79% response rate. The following represents a summary of the findings:

1. Admission to a Community College is not contigent upon the completion of an examination.

2. More than half of the Colleges (52%) require an examination prior to registration.

3. Community Colleges rely on commercially prepared examinations for placement purposes.

4. Scores of the examinations are used for placement in 52% of the Colleges. Counseling accounts for 48%. Some colleges use the scores for both purposes.

5. Almost two thirds of the Colleges use a writing examination, and a writing sample is used by 57% of the colleges for placement in English composition courses. Writing sample and objective tests are used by a limited number of colleges.

6. Two readers are used in scoring the writing sample in 62% of the colleges. One reader is used by 48%.

7. English courses are used as prerequisites for other English courses by 75% of the colleges; however, only one college uses English courses as prerequisites for social sciences courses while two other colleges use the English

courses for occupational education.

8. Scores in the English Placement Examination are used as prerequisites in English courses by eight colleges. No college uses the scores for other class prerequisites.

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